

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Minute of the Meeting held on 31 October 2018

*Present:* Professor K Shennan (Convener), Dr T Baker, Ms D Connolly, Mr C Duncan, Professor C Kee, Mr O Kucerak, Professor E Pavlovskaia and Dr B Scharlau with Dr R Bernard, Ms K Christie, Ms N Kinchin-Williams and Ms E Hay (Clerk) in attendance

*Apologies:* Professor P McGeorge, Professor A Jenkinson, Dr S Tucker, Professor R Wells, and Dr G Mackintosh and Ms P Spence

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH AND 4 JUNE 2018**

*(copy filed as UCTL/311018/001a and UCTL/311018/001b)*

- 1.1 The Convener opened the meeting and welcomed members of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) to the first meeting of the academic year.
- 1.2 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 28 March and 4 June as accurate representations of discussions held.

**MATTERS ARISING**

- 2.1 With reference to the minute of the meeting held on 28 March, updates on the actions points were provided to the Committee as follows:
  - (i) Incident in the MacRobert car park (minute point 2.2 refers): Members of the Committee noted that subsequent of the reporting of the incident to Estates, the zebra crossing has been made more visible.
  - (ii) Presentation from the Senate Task Forces (minute point 3.1 refers): Members of the Committee noted that this item had been postponed from the March meeting but not yet including on an agenda for discussion. The Clerk agreed to discuss this issue with Professor McGeorge.  
*Action: Clerk*
  - (iii) Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Analysis of HEI Annual Returns (minute point 7.1 refers): Members of the Committee noted that this item had been postponed from the March meeting but not yet including on an agenda for discussion. The Clerk agreed to discuss this issue with Professor McGeorge.  
*Action: Clerk*
  - (iv) Careers Service Annual Report (minute point 15.6 refers): The Committee noted the action on Mr Fantom, who has now retired from the University. The Committee asked that clarification be provided on whether or not the report has been circulated as requested.  
*Action: Clerk*

***Clerk's Note: Confirmation received from the Careers Service of the circulation of the Report to the Employers Board and circulation of the Infographic to Schools.***

**HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING**

- 3.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health, Safety and Wellbeing. The Committee acknowledged the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing day at the Foresterhill campus on Thursday 8 November 2018.

**REMIT AND COMPOSITION 2018/19***(copy file as UCTL/311018/002)*

- 4.1 The Committee considered the Remit and Composition for 2018/19. The Committee noted the required updates to the Committee's composition and the Vice Principal (Education)'s title. The Committee further proposed the following changes to the composition:
- That a Library representative be asked to join the Committee, in addition to the existing representative of IT Services;
  - That the role of Dean for Transnational Education (TNE) be considered for replacement with the Vice Principal (International);
  - That the Vice Principal (Student Recruitment) be asked to join the Committee.

- 4.2 Regarding the Committee's remit, the Committee sought clarity in the role with regards to the approval of minimum Entry Requirements. The Committee acknowledged that these are set by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee (SRAC) but expressed a lack of clarity over which body approves them for use.

**Action: Clerk****Clerk's Note: Remit and Composition updated.****HONOURS WEIGHTING IN DEGREE CLASSIFICATION***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/003)*

- 5.1 The Committee received the paper on Honours Weighting in Degree Classification, noting that, at the Senate meeting in May 2018, this aspect of the paper discussing the move to a single Honours classification systems had been postponed to allow for further discussion and evidence gathering. The Committee noted this initial opportunity for discussion and the additional information, including:
- (i) Information provided by other Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to determine the weighting used for Honours classification, whether study abroad grades were used in classification, what their borderline zone was and what they considered in borderline decisions and;
  - (ii) Data gathered from Student Records System (SRS) for the 2017/18 graduating cohort. For each student's record, degree classification was calculated based on the Grade Point Average (GPA) using the grades awarded in their L3 and L4 courses.
- 5.2 Members of the Committee asked whether the final outcomes for borderline students graduating in 2017/18 was available. The Committee noted that this data was not possible to gather and that degree outcomes in these instances would have been reached at Examiner's Meetings.
- 5.3 Members of the Committee expressed concern at the national problem of the increasing number of first class degrees being awarded to students. The Committee noted that the University of Aberdeen was 3<sup>rd</sup> in Scotland and 16<sup>th</sup> in the UK as a whole in terms of the award of first class and upper second class degree classifications. Members of the Committee

acknowledged that the national issue was one Universities Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) were looking into. Members of the Committee also noted that high degree classifications can be representative of high entry tariffs and value added by the University during a student's studies. The Committee acknowledged the difficult position, particularly in recognition of External Examiners' Reports, which state grading across the Institution is appropriate.

- 5.4 The Committee noted feedback provided by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Undergraduate Committee (UGC) on the paper. Overall, these Committees had noted concern at the push for University wide consistency, when the paper provided information that other Scottish HEIs do not have consistency across their component Schools. The Committees expressed the clearly disparate views of the Institution and of a desire that Schools retain their current processes. Members of the Committee proposed that the paper be split into two, addressing the issues of honours classification and borderlines separately. It was noted that a split would allow for the Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) to feed into discussions on borderlines.
- 5.5 Members of the Committee expressed concern regarding the current lack of transparency for students in how their degree classification would be calculated. The Committee considered a specific example of a student unable to determine how their degree would be calculated. It was agreed that information for this student would be provided.
- 5.6 Overall, the Committee agreed that there was unlikely to be consensus across Schools. The Committee raised Intercalating students, students who study abroad and articulating students all as groups of students for whom a 50/50 weighting split between courses undertaken at levels three and four may not be appropriate.
- 5.7 With regards to the issue of borderlines, the Committee suggested that the current borderline was too wide and that they would be more comfortable with a shortened borderline. The Committee acknowledged that mitigation could be a matter considered at Examiner's Meetings for students who fall within the borderline, but that if already considered at course level, it should not be considered again.
- 5.8 The Committee sought clarification as to the method of classification for the existing third year cohort. The Convener confirmed that students currently in level three would be classified under the GPA and by weighting split and borderlines currently set by individual Schools. The Committee noted confusion regarding this position and agreed that communication would be issued prior to Examiner's Meetings.

*Action: Professor Shennan*

- 5.9 The Committee considered whether using Orals as a method of further testing borderline students was appropriate. The Committee discussed that, in principle, such an approach may be appropriate, however, expressed some concern that this was a means of further assessing these students.

*Action: Paper to proceed to Senate for an academic view. Professor Shennan to provide an amended paper to the Clerk to the Senate.*

**LEARNING ANALYTICS POLICY***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/004)*

6.1 The Committee considered the draft Learning Analytics Policy, noting that it was provided for discussion and not approval at this time. Committee raised the following points, to be fed back to those leading on the policy:

- Regarding Value 2, the Committee sought clarity around how and when student data could be used and where an issue is flagged up, asked whether the University would be obligated to pursue. Further to this, the Committee sought clarification on who would (i) be pursuing these matters and (ii) have oversight of the process.
- In addition, regarding Value 2, the Committee noted concern that data reference is already used in a punitive manner (student attendance monitoring). Would such practice be able to continue?
- The Committee sought information on practice at other HEIs and lessons, which can be learnt from their experiences.

6.2 Overall, the Committee were positive about the paper, pending the required further detail to follow.

*Action: Clerk*

**Clerk's Note: Feedback provided by the UCTL, passed to Learning Analytics Team. A revised paper will now proceed to the next Committee cycle.**

**ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) UPDATE***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/005)*

7.1 The Committee received an update on preparations for the forthcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) panel visit. The Committee noted that the panel had undertaken a planning visit on the 10<sup>th</sup> October and, further to this meeting, had provided a review programme, themes to explore and a list of requested documentation/additional information.

**INSTITUTIONAL ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT PROGRESS REPORT***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/006)*

8.1 The Committee received the paper on the Institutional Enhanced Transcript, noting the update on the progress of Enhanced Transcript since 2013/14. The Committee sought clarification on the appropriateness of the means of assessing the proposed new recognised activities as listed below. It was agreed that this issue would be clarified before the Committee would be asked to approve the roles for inclusion.

- University Museum Volunteer Role;
- Music Interview Support Assistant Role;
- Scottish Innovative Student Award (SISA).

*Action: Clerk*

**Clerk's Note: Clarification received from Dr Perkins and paper recirculated to the Committee for approval. Paper approved by circulation.**

**MINIMUM UNDERGRADUATE CAREERS FRAMEWORK AUDIT: OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

(copy filed as UCTL/311018/007)

- 9.1 The Committee considered the paper, provided by the Positive Outcomes Task Force, detailing key findings and recommendations from a recent academic School/discipline audit regarding the Minimum Careers Entitlement Framework and the progress the University has made to address the Framework. The Committee noted the action requested by the paper as follows:

*'The University Committee on Teaching & Learning (UCTL) is invited to consider the data collected thus far and discuss the recommendations listed in terms of further embedding the Framework, which was noted by UCTL in May 2013. UCTL is also asked to consider how to best ensure the consistency of data generated between academic Schools and to encourage sharing of effective employability practice.'*

- 9.2 The Committee expressed concern that the list of employability practices provided were examples only and did not provide an accurate listing of all the ways in which students had the opportunity to engage.
- 9.3 The Committee acknowledged that students were unlikely to be aware of the Minimum Undergraduate Careers Framework (MUCF) and the expectations on them.
- 9.4 The Committee sought a more detailed audit, perhaps by way of a mapping exercise, providing information on how each degree programme provides the points included in the MUCF. The Committee noted that completion of the compulsory course PD1001 provides much, if not all, of the requirements at level one. The Committee noted that Schools should be made aware of what the PD coded courses cover.
- 9.5 The Committee felt that they did not have enough information within the paper in order to take the action as recommended in the paper and asked that the Positive Outcomes Task Force provide further information in relation to the current position across Schools. Members of the Committee noted that data collected as part of the School Planning process may also be useful to the Task Force.
- 9.6 The Chair of the Positive Outcomes Task Force confirmed that work on the MUCF was at an early stage and that further to the gathering of the list of examples included in the paper, the Task Force was considering how word of these examples could be spread. He noted that they were at the beginning of gathering further information from Schools.

**Action: Positive Outcomes Task Force**

**Clerk's Note: Item referred back to Positive Outcomes Task Force for action.**

**DIGITAL BADGES: ONLINE ACCREDITATION OF STUDENTS' SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

(copy filed as UCTL/311018/008)

- 10.1 The Committee received the paper on digital badges for skills and graduate attribute-based recognition and the proposed pilots to be undertaken in the co-curriculum and curriculum. The Committee noted that the proposal had begun as part of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement Theme on Transitions and that the electronic badges were intended to be a means of students demonstrating additional skills achieved, to potential employers.

- 10.2 The Committee sought clarification on the position of the Students' Association and expressed the importance of this. It was also noted that student attendance at focus groups had been poor, highlighting the need for student input.

**Action: Students' Association**

- 10.3 The Committee acknowledged that it may not be possible to display digital badges in MyMBChB as a consequence of the Moodle software used.

- 10.4 Overall, the Committee agreed to approve the pilots and asked that they be reviewed and feedback be provided to the UCTL.

**Action: Clerk**

**Clerk's Note: Feedback provided to Dr Perkins.**

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 2pm, in the Videoconferencing Suite, University Office.

#### **CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/311018/009)*

- 12.1 Members of the Committee approved changes to the General Regulations for First Degrees. The changes proposed reflect the decision as taken by the Senate to permit resits, capped at D3, to be used in Honours classification calculations. The Committee agreed that the changes should be recommended to the Senate and the Court for immediate use.

#### **MINUTES AND UPDATE REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 13.1 The Committee noted the minutes as provided by the sub-committees as follows:

- |       |                                      |   |
|-------|--------------------------------------|---|
| (i)   | Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)    | <i>(copy filed as UCTL/311018/010a)</i> |
| (ii)  | Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) | <i>(copy filed as UCTL/311018/010b)</i> |
| (iii) | Undergraduate Committee (UGC)        | <i>(copy filed as UCTL/311018/010c)</i> |

#### **REVIEW OF PILOT OF REVISED INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW (ITR) PROCESS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/311018/011)*

- 13.2 The Committee noted the paper on the first pilot of the new ITR process conducted in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC). Provided in the papers for the information of the UCTL was an overview of the new process; the formal outcome report from LLMVC; and a review of the new process. The Committee noted that further updates on the new process would be provided following the next pilot, to be undertaken in the School of Biological Sciences.

#### **ATTENDANCE MONITORING PILOT**

*(copy filed as UCTL/311018/012)*

- 13.3 The Committee noted the update on the Attendance Monitoring Pilot, considered by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Committees. The Committee acknowledged that a further update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

**LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2018/19***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/013)*

- 13.4 Members of the Committee noted the latest dates for the return of Examination Results for 2018/19 as approved by the Committee in September 2018, by way of circulation.

**DATES OF TERM TO 2029***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/014)*

- 13.5 Members of the Committee noted the Dates of Term to 2029 as approved by the Committee in September 2018, by way of circulation.

**NATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP SCHEME (NTFS)***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/015)*

- 13.6 The Committee noted the update on the NTFS and an outline of the plan developed by the Centre for Academic Development to prepare for NTFS (2019) as circulated to the Committee in September 2018.

**DATES OF TERM FOR 2018/19***(copy filed as UCTL/311018/016)*

- 13.7 The Committee noted the dates of term for 2018/19 as approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer and as circulated to the Committee in September 2018.

**GRADUATION DATES**

- 13.8 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer and as circulated to the Committee in September 2018:

**Thursday 22 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School and School of Law.

**Thursday 22 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Engineering, School of Natural & Computing Sciences and School of Biological Sciences.

**Friday 23 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Education, School of Divinity, History & Philosophy, School of Social Science, School of Psychology and School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture.

**Friday 23 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Geosciences and School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition.